locations are marked on Ordnance Survey maps so that details of a find and the findspot can be cross-referenced. The SMR is normally based in a county council's Planning Department or Museum Department and is looked after by a Sites and Monuments Records Officer and a County Archaeologist. Over the last ten years these local authorities, with help from English Heritage, have been building up these SMRs. They will never be complete since new discoveries are being made all the time. County Archaeologists will also know what monuments and sites can be visited, what interpretative and educational facilities are available, whether any digs are going on and who may be useful sources of further information.

What can we learn about our area?

The public may consult the SMR to learn more about the archaeology all around them. These were developed principally for planning and conservation purposes—to monitor and control development affecting archaeological sites—but they also have an educational role. The landscape contains surviving traces of past societies: a scatter of prehistoric flints and sherds in a ploughed field, a cropmark of an iron age farm and its fields, earthworks of the houses and tenements of a deserted medieval village. Many hedges date back to the medieval period and possibly even earlier. In towns and cities, the ground beneath our feet may contain the accumulated remains, often deep, of the town’s past going back one or two thousand years. Teachers can use the SMR to explain how the environment of the area has come to be as it is, what archaeological indicators survive in the landscape and how these might continue to be conserved.

What can we see?

It’s very likely that there are archaeological sites in your area that can be visited. While much lies under field levels, some may be visible as earthworks. A visit to these may require some preparation in interpreting the humps and bumps. There are more impressive sites such as castles and abbeys—which may have interpretation boards, pamphlets and even custodians. Ask the County Archaeologist which sites can be visited, whether they are in public or private ownership, if there is an entrance charge, what opening restrictions there are, and whether permission must be sought in advance from the owners. Most importantly, the County Archaeologist should be able to give you some historical information on the sites and point you to further sources to follow up.

What’s on?

There is likely to be a professional organisation (an archaeological trust or unit) in your county or region who will be working on field projects. These will include field surveys, excavation and ‘post-excavation’ (analysing and writing up the results). You should be able to arrange visits to archaeological digs. Archaeologists have become far more conscious of on-site interpretation and welcoming visitors—if you are not allowed to visit, it may be because landowners are worried about responsibility for the sites on their property. It’s always best to check with the County Archaeologist first. On many sites there are information boards and someone to guide large parties (with advance notice). Often there will be a ‘dig open day’, and school parties may be encouraged to visit them. Units also hold open days when their premises and all their projects will be on show. Some are

a growing number of entrepreneurs, who are not archaeological experts, cashing in with bogus and misleading ‘reconstruction’.

So you want to go digging?

With a growing awareness of landscape conservation, archaeologists, planners and conservationists have become more concerned about how many archaeological sites are being damaged, both by development and by well-intentioned but inexpert groups. Archaeological excavation is now a sophisticated practice requiring a multitude of skills. It is best to take expert advice from professional archaeologists and to see about doing fieldwork under their guidance than to go it alone. Some excavations, such as at Stanwick in Northamptonshire, can arrange for school classes of all ages to come and dig for the day; others may be able to take on older school children. Archaeologists in the field are often under pressure to meet deadlines imposed in their contracts and may not be able to spare the time to teach children to dig. Equally, some sites are too fragile or complex for untrained diggers.

Some teachers might be interested in working on a dig in their holidays. If you want to go further afield than your town or region, there is the British Archaeological Association (BAA) which has several branches throughout the country. Membership costs £5 a year and allows you to join in with meetings, talks, woodpeckers, and even a sausage barbeque in the country. The BAA also has a newsletter and a library. There is an annual conference in November with a wide range of talks, lectures and exhibitions. For full details, contact the nearest branch or the national office, 120 Oxford Road, Reading, Berks, RG6 1LX. Tel: 0118 921 3313.

Making an accurate drawn record of the site.

Archaeological News (BAN), published by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA), is a valuable resource for archaeological excavations which require site workers, limited experience or inexperienced. BAN is taken by many large libraries; you can also subscribe by writing to the CBA, 112 High Holborn, London, WC1V 6EE. The cost is £9.00 a year. Archaeological education is growing fast in the profession. As well as the local societies and museums, there are archaeological units and trusts which now carry out much of the field research that is done in this country, normally in advance of development schemes. Many have a strong prescriptive and educational element. The County Archaeologists can advise teachers in their area. However, they are busy people with a difficult job to do—try not to take up too much of their time in getting what you want. A few local authorities, such as Northamptonshire, Norwich, Wrexham and Lincoln, may have an archaeological education officer or even a heritage interpretation officer. They may be able to give some experimental and their success to date bodes well for English Heritage, the Countryside Commission and local authorities to support more pots like these around the country.

Mike Parker Pearson
Formerly Director of Ancient Monuments and Heritage for English Heritage in the Midlands, now lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Sheffield.

There are two seconded teachers currently working with schools at Archaeology Units on behalf of English Heritage. Please contact Stuart Bennett in Lincolnshire, or Rachel Shaw in Northamptonshire if you want further help. See list below for full address details.

### Sites and Monuments Records Address List

(CAO = County Archaeological Officer; SMRO = Sites and Monuments Records Officer)

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<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>CAO Contact Name</th>
<th>CAO Address</th>
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**Careful recording of finds.**

becoming very sophisticated in their educational and presentional aspects.

In York you can visit the ARC (Archaeological Resources Centre) and watch archaeologists at work on post-excavation as well as handle the finds. At Flag Fen, near Peterborough, you can see the excavations, visit an exhibition and go inside the reconstructions that they have reconstructed. Archaeological reconstructions of new-built buildings are increasing in popularity and in most parts of the country, you will not be far from a reconstructed iron age, Roman, Saxon or medieval house or settlement. The quality of the reconstructions varies—most archaeologists pay considerable attention to accuracy of detail but there is
En route... Hailes Abbey

En Route is a series written by teachers who have investigated one of our less visited monuments. In this issue St. Richard’s C of E Priory, Evesham visit Hailes Abbey in Gloucestershire.

Getting into the Hailes habit!

There is one historical visit during my far-off school days that stands out vividly in my memory. That was a trip for the ruins of the once magnificent Cistercian abbey at Hailes near Winchcombe, and to learn about the famous relic formerly enshrined there, a vial reputedly containing the blood of Christ.

As a child I remember the peacefulness of the site being very appealing, even though I was accompanied by a crowd of classmates. In later life I have often revisited the ruins especially during the spring when the bulbs are in bloom.

When the opportunity arose to accompany my husband’s class of juniors on a visit to Hailes Abbey I jumped at it. We made a preliminary visit two weeks before the day of the excursion to the work-abandoned abbey, bathed in the late afternoon sunlight, was as restful as ever. On the edges of the site there was a profusion of wild flowers amid the tall meadow grass. This led us to include a wild flower meadow in our school’s nature work.

We were further delighted to discover that there was a mark-making in vegetation in an enclosed patch of wetland at the side of the grounds, the site of the abbey fishponds, where a stream made its way towards the monastery’s garden.

Having browsed the guide books to the abbey and the village church which is close by, we were both filled with enthusiasm. Fundly enough my husband had become thoroughly absorbed in the historical aspects of the site. I had been becoming more and more interested in the natural aspect of the grounds, and notes when drawing up plans of work.

Two days before the class visit we visited at Hailes Abbey for a last reconnaissance. Imagine our dismay when we discovered that the long grass with its wonderful array of flowers had been cut close to the ground sooner than usual by a new contractor for the enclosed walled gardens. No longer could we distinguish the differences in vegetation and the loss of the meadow wild flowers was a sore blow to us both.

Plans, however, all was not lost. The custodian of the grounds was most helpful and suggested that we should look at some adjacent scrubland which had been left uncut for the preceding summer. The untamed wilderness proved to be even better for comparison with plants growing on the clipped lawns of the abbey. Mr. Greenhalgh also drew our attention to other aspects of wild life on the site. He showed us wild bees buzzing about heather high in the museum building and pampered out but drooping on the tiny pipistrelle bats which inhabited the roof of the abbey. We were carcin of the bee sanctuary and locates in the plan of the abbey. The site of the shrine which once held the holy relic was pinpointed and discussion about its use. Was it really the blood of Christ? The children pondered upon the question.

Then the class split into three groups each led by helper and accompanied one of the parents. The first group were to compile a wild flower survey, the second to measure different lengths and widths and calculate areas within the abbey church and monastery buildings, whilst the third group was to sit in the studios and use their eyes and ears to contemplate their surroundings, the results of which became the inspiration of this school’s poetry. That last group then made pencil sketches to illustrate the poems, and some of these drawings were very pleasing. The idea was to rotate the groups so that all the children would experience working alongside each teacher for the different tasks. In the event, however, everyone was so engrossed with the work that there was only time for one change overs before lunch.

My own group found an amazing twenty one varieties of wild flowers in the school grounds. The assignment was to work in pairs and throw a hoop ten times in different parts of the grounds, and to make a reference in species within the hoop and mark them.

Group Poetry on Hailes abbey
Old ragged ruins
Walls very looked at and rough.
The cloisters are cold.
Cracked stones, ragged walls, 
Bartered arches, broken stones, 
Cumbersome night skies.

When I go to Hailes Abbey I shall see at Hailes Abbey
Two bobbing blue tits, 
Three long-legged
Four squirrels scrabbling, 
Five dainty daffodils, 
Seven sheep shuffling, 
Eight huge horned cherry trees, 
Nine bee buzzing, 
Ten ragged ruins, 
And a sighing holting.
That’s what I shall see.
David Venno

Hailes Abbey, Gloucestershire, is 2 miles NE of Winchcombe off the A43 and OS map 150, ref SP 05030. This cistercian abbey, founded in 1246 has remains of the monastic buildings and cloister. The site museum has examples of carved stone and decorated tiles. Tel: 0272-734472 to book a free group visit.